Montana Department of Natural Resources and Conservation
Water Resources Division
Water Rights Bureau

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT
For Routine Actions with Limited Environmental Impact

Part I. Proposed Action Description

1. Applicant/Contact name and address: *Salish Shores Utility Corp. Inc., PO Box 1030, Thompson Falls, MT 59873*

2. Type of action: *Application to Change a Water Right 76N 30027719*

3. Water source name: *Groundwater*

4. Location affected by project: *SW¼NE¼SE¼, Section 16, Township 21N, Range 29W, SW¼NE¼SE¼, Section 16, Township 21N, Range 29W, SW¼SW¼SE¼, Section 15, Township 21N, Range 29W, SW¼SW¼SE¼, Section 15, Township 21N, Range 29W, NE¼SW¼NW¼, Section 15, Township 21N, Range 29W, NE¼SW¼NW¼, Section 15, Township 21N, Range 29W, NE¼SW¼NW¼, Section 15, Township 21N, Range 29W. Seven wells manifold will comprise a municipal water supply system.*

5. Narrative summary of the proposed project, purpose, action to be taken, and benefits:
The DNRC shall issue a water use permit if an applicant proves the criteria in 85-2-402 MCA are met. *Four Provisional Water Use Permits have been issued for incremental phases of what is now a Master Development Plan regulated by the Public Service Commission (PSC) for the area encompassed by the four subject permits. This change application is to add an additional point of diversion by means of a back-up well, change the purpose of use to municipal, manifold all points of diversion as the Master Plan delineates and make all places of use identical. Generally, four wells will be the primary diversions and the other three wells will be used for emergency and back up purposes. The wells will serve the entire service area described as the place of use by the previously issued permits. There will be no increase in the flow rate or volume of the four subject permits already issued. This application is to commingle the water in a manifold system for municipal use required by the Master Development Plan. The benefit to both the applicant and customers of the public utility water system will ensure adequate service, reasonable rates and the opportunity to earn a fair rate of return on the public utility investment.*

6. Agencies consulted during preparation of the Environmental Assessment:
(include agencies with overlapping jurisdiction)
Agencies contacted in September, 2005: Sanders County Board of Commissioners
Natural Heritage Program
State Historic Preservation Office

Part II. Environmental Review

1. Environmental Impact Checklist:

PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

WATER QUANTITY, QUALITY AND DISTRIBUTION

Water quantity *- Assess whether the source of supply is identified as a chronically or periodically dewatered stream by DFWP. Assess whether the proposed use will worsen the already dewatered condition.*

Determination: Not Applicable

Water quality *- Assess whether the stream is listed as water quality impaired or threatened by DEQ, and whether the proposed project will affect water quality.*

Determination: Not Applicable

Groundwater *- Assess if the proposed project impacts ground water quality or supply. If this is a groundwater appropriation, assess if it could impact adjacent surface water flows.*

Determination: Pumping tests were previously performed on each of the existing Salish Shores Utility Corp. Inc. wells to evaluate the hydraulic response of the aquifer to pumping these wells. Drawdown responses were detected in observation wells closest to the well being tested during testing of 1, 3 and 4 while no drawdown was observed in any of the other wells monitored. No drawdown was measured in any observation well during the testing of well 2. Groundwater modeling results suggest that there is the potential for an induced leakage from the leaky confining unit above the semi-confined aquifer. This leakage could in turn induce an increased rate of seepage from the Clark Fork River into the underlying shallow aquifer. Any impact on surface water is minimal and the appropriation is already permitted making the issue of induced leakage moot.

DIVERSION WORKS *- Assess whether the means of diversion, construction and operation of the appropriation works of the proposed project will impact any of the following: channel impacts, flow modifications, barriers, riparian areas, dams, well construction.*

Determination: The wells were completed in accordance with the rules of the Board of Water Well Contractors by a licensed well driller. They are drilled and operational making ground disturbing activities complete. There is no impact from this change.

UNIQUE, ENDANGERED, FRAGILE OR LIMITED ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES

Endangered and threatened species *- Assess whether the proposed project will impact any threatened or endangered fish, wildlife, plants or aquatic species or any "species of special concern," or create a barrier to the migration or movement of fish or wildlife. For groundwater, assess whether the proposed project, including impacts on adjacent surface flows, would impact any threatened or endangered species or "species of special concern."*

Determination: A county required environmental assessment is completed prior to subdivision approval. The assessment requires information on geology, surface water, vegetation, wildlife, cultural features, sewage treatment, solid waste, drainage, roads, schools, economic benefits

from increased revenue, land use related to a comprehensive plan, parks and recreation, and utilities. This information is available through Sanders County.

Wetlands *- Consult and assess whether the apparent wetland is a functional wetland (according to COE definitions), and whether the wetland resource would be impacted.*

Determination: There are no wetlands in the area that will be affected. No impact.

Ponds *- For ponds, consult and assess whether existing wildlife, waterfowl, or fisheries resources would be impacted.*

Determination: No impact.

GEOLOGY/SOIL QUALITY, STABILITY AND MOISTURE - *Assess whether there will be degradation of soil quality, alteration of soil stability, or moisture content. Assess whether the soils are heavy in salts that could cause saline seep.*

Determination: This Application to Change a Water Right has no impact.

VEGETATION COVER, QUANTITY AND QUALITY/NOXIOUS WEEDS - *Assess impacts to existing vegetative cover. Assess whether the proposed project would result in the establishment or spread of noxious weeds.*

Determination: No physical activity. No impact..

AIR QUALITY - *Assess whether there will be a deterioration of air quality or adverse effects on vegetation due to increased air pollutants.*

Determination: No impact

HISTORICAL AND ARCHEOLOGICAL SITES - *Assess whether there will be degradation of unique archeological or historical sites in the vicinity of the proposed project.*

Determination: No physical activity. No impact.

DEMANDS ON ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES OF LAND, WATER, AND ENERGY - *Assess any other impacts on environmental resources of land, water and energy not already addressed.*

Determination: None

HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

LOCALLY ADOPTED ENVIRONMENTAL PLANS AND GOALS - *Assess whether the proposed project is inconsistent with any locally adopted environmental plans and goals.*

Determination: The change application is being filed to correspond with the Master Plan. The project is consistent.

ACCESS TO AND QUALITY OF RECREATIONAL AND WILDERNESS ACTIVITIES - *Assess whether the proposed project will impact access to or the quality of recreational and wilderness activities.*

Determination: This change will not impact recreational activities.

HUMAN HEALTH - *Assess whether the proposed project impacts on human health.*

Determination: No impact

PRIVATE PROPERTY - *Assess whether there are any government regulatory impacts on private property rights.*
*Yes___ No_**X**__ If yes, analyze any alternatives considered that could reduce, minimize, or eliminate the regulation of private property rights.*

Determination: No impact

OTHER HUMAN ENVIRONMENTAL ISSUES - *For routine actions of limited environmental impact, the following may be addressed in a checklist fashion.*

Impacts on:

(a) Cultural uniqueness and diversity? No

(*b) Local and state tax base and tax revenues?* No

(c) Existing land uses? No

(*d) Quantity and distribution of employment?* No

(e) Distribution and density of population and housing? No

(f) Demands for government services? Yes

(g) Industrial and commercial activity? No

(h) Utilities? Yes

(i) Transportation? No

(j) Safety? No

(k) Other appropriate social and economic circumstances? Regulated by the Public Service Commission.

2. ***Secondary and cumulative impacts on the physical environment and human population:*** None

Secondary Impacts : Customer protection of reasonable water rates.

Cumulative Impacts: None

3. ***Describe any mitigation/stipulation measures:*** None

4. ***Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives to the proposed action, including the no action alternative, if an alternative is reasonably available and prudent to consider:*** No action may nullify the Master Plan. No reasonable alternative exists.

PART III. Conclusion

1. ***Preferred Alternative***: As requested

2 ***Comments and Responses***: None

3. ***Finding:***
*Yes___ No_**X**__ Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required?*

If an EIS is not required, explain why the EA is the appropriate level of analysis for this proposed action: No significant impacts have been identified; therefore, no EIS is necessary.

Name of person(s) responsible for preparation of EA:

Name: Rich Russell
Title: Water Resources Specialist
Date: May 16, 2007